

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2566

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PGOV MY

SUBJ: FURTHER INDICATIONS SARAWAK OPPOSITION PARTY MAY JOIN
NATIONAL FRONT COALITION

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 0797 (DTG 120940Z FEB 76)

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FURTHER REPORTS THAT SARAWAK NATIONAL PARTY (SNAP) IS ABOUT TO JOIN THE RULING NATIONAL FRONT (NF) COALITION. A WELL-CONNECTED JOURNALIST TOLD US THAT PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN WOULD MAKE THE FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF SNAP'S ENTRY INTO THE NF DURING A VISIT TO KUCHING, SARAWAK, MARCH 2. GDESS REPORTS HAVE LINKED TRIPS TO SARAWAK OF INFORMATION MINISTER TAIB MAHMUD AND, MORE RECENTLY, BY AGRICULTURE MINISTER GHAFAR BABA, SENIOR UMNO VICE PRESIDENT AND ALSO SECRETARY GENERAL OF NF, WITH NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS MATTER. BOTH, HOWEVER, HAVE DENIED SUCH CONNECTION.

2. SAME JOURNALIST MENTIONED IN PASSING THAT ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION HUSSEIN ONN WOULD FLY ON TO SABAH
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MARCH 3. THIS WOULD BE HIS FIRST VISIT THERE AS PM

AND PRESUMABLY WOULD AFFORD HIM A BRIEF REVIEW OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BITTER ELECTION CAMPAIGN NOW UNDERWAY FOR STATE ASSEMBLY SEATS BETWEEN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED BERJAYA PARTY AND EX-SABAH CHIEF MINISTER TUN MUSTAPHA'S USNO PARTY. ACCORDING TO THIS SCENARIO, HUSSEIN ONN WOULD RETURN TO K.L. LATER SAME DAY AND HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THE APPOINTMENT OF HIS DEPUTY AND OTHER CABINET CHANGES. THEN ON MARCH 6 PM WOULD TRAVEL TO IPOH, WHERE HE WOULD ANNOUNCE CREATION OF NEW REGIONAL SECURITY COMMAND TO UPGRADE COUNTER-INSURGENCY EFFORTS IN NORTHERN PERAK/SOUTHERN KEDAH AREA. (WE HAVE HEARD SIMILAR REPORTS FROM OTHER SOURCES, ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE DATES VARY).

3. COMMENT: SPECULATION ON POSSIBLE ADMISSION OF SNAP INTO NF ACCELERATED WITH RELEASE JAN 30 OF SNAP DEPUTY PRESIDENT DATUK JAMES WONG FROM 15 MONTHS DETENTION UNDER INTERNAL SECURITY ACT (ISA). EFFECT OF SNAP CROSSOVER WOULD BE TO REDUCE BY ABOUT HALF ALREADY MINISCULE OPPOSITION REPRESENTATION IN 154 MEMBER DEWAN RAKYAT (HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES), NOW TOTALING ONLY 19 (9 SNAP, 9 DAP, 1 PEKEMAS). DAP MP FOR KUALA LUMPUR TOLD EMBOFFS FEB 23, WITH AIR OF RESIGNATION, THAT HE BELIEVED SNAP WOULD JOIN NF SINCE NO SNAP SPOKESMAN HAD AS YET PUBLICLY DENIED SUCH REPORTS. IN SARAWAK EFFECT WOULD BE MORE DRAMATIC, AS 18 SNAP STATE ASSEMBLYMEN ARE ONLY OPPOSITION IN 48 MEMBER ASSEMBLY. UNDERHILL

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